

Longing for the Good Old Days?

How good, really, were the good old days? Consider what we have gained that was *not in place* just before many of today's employees began with Norfolk Public Schools. But EAN, VEA and NEA have worked steadily to secure these improvements that are enjoyed today. Following is a summary of the *most significant* improvements in the past 45 years.

- 1962 – VEA's first major lobbying success involving retirement — lowered the age for full benefits to age 60 with 30 years of service.
 - 1974 – The calculation of retirement benefits was changed to be based on the **3** highest earning years instead of the 5 highest, resulting in an increase in the final average salary for most retirees.
 - 1974 – NEA won in the United States Supreme Court the case that secured the right of pregnant teachers to remain on the job, thereby continuing to accumulate retirement service credit.
 - 1975 – VEA persuaded the General Assembly to put the VRS (then known as VSRS) on level cost funding — a complicated concept that guaranteed the financial base of retirement benefits.
 - 1977 – VEA lobbied successfully to block during the years of high inflation the first of three major efforts to reduce retirement benefits.
 - 1979 – VEA blocked a move to cap retirement benefits for those with more than 30 years of experience.
 - 1980 – VEA blocked the third and final effort (at least until Governor Gilmore) to cut retirement benefits. But today, a new threat has arisen, not for you, but for those who follow you. A move is underway to covert the VRS to a defined contribution plan (that is, invest your funds yourself in the stock market). This is similar to the national debate over privatizing Social Security.
 - 1985 – EAN and Norfolk Public Schools agreed in Meet and Discuss that the school system would begin paying the 5% employee contribution to VRS. This netted all covered employees a 5½% increase in take-home pay **on top of** a 10% pay raise! The largest single pay raise for Norfolk school employees in history.
- Speaking of historic pay raises, the years 1981 to 1985 under Governor Charles Robb brought dramatic pay raises in teacher and support personnel salaries that pay off again for you this year in higher retirement benefits.
- 1987 – VEA secured General Assembly approval to lower the retirement age for full benefits to age 55 with 30 years of service.
 - 1996 – The VRS was converted into a public trust — meaning no more could the state “borrow” VRS funds at low interest rates to finance state projects.
 - 1998 – EAN persuaded Norfolk Public Schools in Meet and Confer to drop the requirement that a retiree needed 100 days of sick leave to remain the school

- system's health insurance plan and in 2001 Norfolk agreed to pay \$20 per day for the first 100 days of unused sick leave in addition to days accumulated above 100!.
- 1998 – VEA secured passage of state payment to retirees of up to \$540 per year toward the cost of health insurance premiums.
 - 1998 – EAN secured new Memorandum of Understanding language to allow religious leave to be taken as comp time.
 - 1999 – EAN's long-standing goal is achieved to provide elementary classroom teachers with 225 minutes of planning time per week. One 45-minute period is to be used in collaborative planning and another 45-minute period is reserved for professional development. The remainder of the time is used for individual teacher and/or collaborative planning at the discretion of the teacher.
 - 1999 – VEA lobbied and won an increase in the state health insurance payment up to \$900 per year (or \$75 per month)
 - 1999 – VEA secured what some consider the *Holy Grail* of retirement benefits: **FULL RETIREMENT AT AGE 50 WITH 30 YEARS OF SERVICE!** It took 25 years (from 1962 to 1987) to lower the retirement age to 55, and then 12 years to lower it to 50! It shows what a good strong economy over the last eight years can mean to retirement enhancement!
 - 2000 – EAN secured new Memorandum of Understanding language to allow teachers to request changes in grade or subject assignment within a particular school. Requests are to be in writing and submitted prior to May 15 each year. Teachers will be notified of the reasons if the request is denied.
 - 2000 – EAN won a teacher supply allocation increase to \$100.
 - 2000 – EAN and the Administration agreed tuition reimbursement be doubled to 2 courses per year (ODU/NSU rates)
 - 2000 – EAN secured a new provision that the Human Resources Department will post in each building vacancies for the following year as early as possible and on a weekly basis through August 1.
 - 2002 – EAN reached agreement with Norfolk Public Schools to begin a \$75 a month payment to retirees in addition to the state \$75 a month payment toward retiree health insurance – a total of \$150 per month.
 - 2002 – EAN won agreement on a proposal allowing employees to choose conversion of the unused allotment of personal leave each June to one (1) additional day for each two (2) unused days, with the maximum accumulation not to exceed three (3) days.
 - 2002 – EAN secured extension of elementary planning time to include resource teachers.
 - 2004 – The Virginia Education Association launches a half-million dollar *Brighter Futures* statewide media campaign and led the formation of three statewide coalitions with education and business leaders to help win passage for Governor Mark Warner's \$1.2 billion increase for public education.

- 2004 – EAN won a teacher supply allocation increase to \$200.
- 2004 – EAN secured new Memorandum of Understanding language requiring that during the school year, teachers shall be given two (2) working days notice prior to the implementation of a transfer to another school or to another assignment within a school. Prior to implementation of the transfer, the teacher being transferred shall be provided a two-day period without supervision of pupils or other assigned duties to prepare for the new assignment. At least one day of the two-day period shall be provided in the new classroom after the previous teacher has finished removing personal materials.
- 2004 – EAN, which negotiated the original sick leave bank, pushed successfully for a significant improvement by reducing the waiting period from 30 workdays to 30 calendar days, essentially reducing the wait period by one-half month.
- 2004 – EAN agreed with the Administration that elementary school clerical specialists were given a grade promotion from grade 4 to grade 6 and increased to 11-month contracts.
- 2005 – EAN continued the quest to upgrade teacher assistants with an agreement that most teacher assistants would see a one-time grade adjustment that would significantly improve their salary. All teacher assistants at Grade 3 or 6 who achieved the level of “highly qualified” under provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act were moved to Grade 8 on the classified pay scale.
- 2005 – EAN saw another long-standing goal for teacher assistants achieved when, in addition to the above, NPS agreed to pay an additional \$1,000 stipend to teacher assistants with a Bachelor’s degree and another \$1,000 stipend to those working in difficult specialties, such as severe and profound, MH, etc.